

Luke 23:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.

Analysis

And he said unto them the third time—Pilate's threefold appeal mirrors Peter's threefold denial (22:61) and anticipates Jesus's threefold question to Peter after resurrection (John 21:15-17). His question, **Why, what evil hath he done?** (τί γὰρ κακὸν ἐποίησεν οὗτος; ti gar kakon epoiesen houtos), demands specific wrongdoing—'What evil did this one do?' The Greek kakon means 'evil,' 'wicked,' 'harmful.' Pilate's third declaration, **I have found no cause of death in him** (οὐδὲν αἴτιον θανάτου εὑρόν εἰν αὐτῷ, ouden aition thanatou heuron en autō), is his final legal verdict: no capital offense exists.

Yet despite this triple testimony to innocence, Pilate capitulates: **I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.** His logic remains perverse—punishing the innocent to appease the guilty. This threefold declaration establishes beyond doubt that Jesus died, not for his crimes, but for ours. The innocent bore what the guilty deserved. Pilate's question 'What evil hath he done?' echoes through history with one answer: none—'he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth' (Isaiah 53:9).

Historical Context

Pilate's threefold appeal represents extraordinary effort for a Roman governor dealing with a subject people. Typically, Roman authority was swift and absolute. His repeated attempts suggest genuine unease—whether from his wife's dream

(Matthew 27:19), superstitious fear of Jesus's claims, or concern about condemning an obviously innocent man. Yet political expediency would ultimately override judicial integrity.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Pilate's threefold declaration of innocence magnify the substitutionary nature of Christ's death?
2. What does Pilate's question 'What evil hath he done?' reveal about the basis of Jesus's qualification to be our sin-bearer?

Interlinear Text

ό	δὲ	τρίτον	εἶπεν	πρὸς	αὐτὸν	Τί	γὰρ	κακὸν
G3588	And	the third time	he said	unto	him	what	Why	evil
	G1161	G5154	G2036	G4314	G846	G5101	G1063	G2556
ἐποίησεν	οὗτος	οὐδὲν	αἴτιον	θανάτου	εὗρον	ἐν		
done	he	no	cause	of death	I have found	in		
G4160	G3778	G3762	G158	G2288	G2147	G1722		
αὐτὸν	παιδεύσας	οὖν	αὐτὸν	ἀπολύσω				
him	I will	therefore	him	and let him go				
G846	G3811	G3767	G846	G630				

Additional Cross-References

Luke 23:14 (Parallel theme): Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

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